

IF the gullotine does, in fact, fall on the Rent Bill as a result of tomorrow night's motion, Mr. Henry Brooke, the new Minister of Housing, may have his first few moments of respite since taking office.

Mr. Brooke is buoyant by nature, and he knows that facts, however complicated, will always give way to a sufficiency of hard work. But when I saw him a day or two ago he admitted that he "didn't quite know what he was taking on" when he accepted his present post. As a Junior Minister, however, he had the advantage of serving under both Mr. Macmillan and Mr. Butler at the Treasury, and he claims that the twenty Bills which he moved while in that position

nearly forty years, a free and, so to say, a dis-employed man.

His career could not be called traditional, for he never underwent the four of duty in small and distant countries which are part of the normal lot of the Foreign Service officer. (Nor, for that matter, did he ever take the Foreign Office examination, for he was admitted by selection in 1919.) But to many outsiders he typified the impersonal elegance and throw-away wit of the professional diplomatist.

Lord Strang has lately set a new standard of excellence for that often discouraging literary form, the diplomatic memoir. Sir Ivone likewise could, if he so wished, do much to illuminate the history of the last twenty years.

#### A Cause Revived

THOSE readers—and they were many—who agreed with me that the British Consulate-General at Nice was worth preserving will be glad to hear that, although the office in question closed last Thursday, there is now a considerable demand for the establishment of a Consulate or Vice-Consulate in Monaco.

The campaign has the support not only of those thousands of British subjects who are inconvenienced by the five-hour journey to Marseilles, but also of the many shipping interests which have occasion to use Monaco harbour. Mr. Onassis is, I understand, one of those who have written to the Foreign Office in its favour, and Lord Elibank tells me that on Thursday he is to put a question on the matter in the House of Lords.

The shade of Lord Brougham may call out for Cannes, but I can't help feeling that Monaco has the stronger case.

#### Slowly Does It

THE Ministry of Works are taking such pains to restore this swiftness House that when they finally open it to the public at the end of next year, they will have taken three times as long as the First Earl of Burlington did to build it.

But the man in charge of the work, Mr. F. A. Faulkner, of the

# PEOPLE and THINGS: By ATTICUS

Ancient Monuments Commission, believes that when it is finished "there will be nothing quite like it in Europe."

With the skill of a Home Office analyst he has worked out Burlington's original colour-schemes from patches

of paint hidden behind the skirting, and after extensive research on Burlington's own drawings in the library at Chatsworth, he is satisfied that the exterior of the house, now shorn of later accretions and painted elephant grey, really is

the villa Burlington originally designed.

#### Murmurous Waters

WHEN Dr. Charles Hill opened the transatlantic underwater telephone service in September of last year, some

people wondered how soon the sea-bed line, which cost £15 million, would pay for itself.

"In no time at all" would seem to be the answer. The cable can carry thirty-six calls at any one time, delays are rare, the habit of calling the U.S.A. is on the increase, and the charge of £1 a minute has proved no deterrent. Calls of twenty minutes' duration to New York—or Los Angeles, for that matter—are nothing unusual, the Post Office tells me, in the life of a rising executive. With possible receipts of over £30,000 a day, I don't think that the cable can be called a bad investment.

#### Literary Streatham

IN Streatham there live two elderly ladies with a particular interest in the start of the new school term.

For more than forty years, with a single-mindedness that Simon himself might envy, the Misses R. K. and M. I. R. Polkinghorne have been writing a considerable proportion of the country's junior text-books.

At their desks before seven each morning, penning away at the manuscript of "Fundamental Arithmetic Teaching" or "Language and Speech Training," they break for lunch at eleven "because we find we are rather hungry by then."

Then more work until the evening when they tell me, they read "very, very trivial novels."

#### Catacombs for Children

Part of their success comes from their amazing versatility. Although they were "not very interested" in needlework, they managed a 400-page book on the subject. Their plays and books on history, geography, English and arithmetic are reprinted year after year, and "Famous Men and Famous Deeds" has been translated into seventeen languages.

But they avoid publicity in case it interferes with their work, and have turned down several invitations to broadcast.

Their greatest interest is scripture teaching, and they expect their "History of the Church" to keep them busy until well into the year. When I saw them they had just started on the catacombs. "That," they told me, "will make a marvellous chapter."

#### Tall Order

ALL went well in Milan, at my colleague Felix Appamian tells us today, with

Francis Poulenc's new opera, "Dialogues des Carmélites."

It might have been otherwise, for M. Poulenc's initial requirements would have taxed the resources of any theatre in the world. "My opera's quite easy to cast," he said to a friend. "For the First Priestess I want Amneris from 'Aida,' and for the Second Priestess a tender, lyrical Desdemona. Mother Marie I see as Brunhilde, Sister Constance as Sophie from 'Werther' and, of course, Blanche, who gives up the world to become a Carmélite, is Thais. The Chevalier, a young man of fashion, could be Octavio in 'Don Giovanni,' and the Marquis—well, he's, the Count from 'Figaro.'"

One thing, certainly, M. Poulenc has picked up on his many visits to England: a liking for a leg-pull.

#### Oriental Remedy

AN ever-credulous believer in the wisdom of the Orient, I shall watch with interest for the results of the Chinese Government's inquiry into the merits of certain traditional Chinese remedies.

Even Mao Tse-tung, I hear, pins his faith in leeches; and as for the ancestral hang-over cure—cow bear, musk, tortoiseshell and camphor—it's still in great demand.

Perhaps Chou En-lai found it useful in Warsaw.

#### Privilege & Responsibility

A CERTAIN penurious discretion is the mark of H.M. Stationery Office when it comes to launching an official history. But Captain S. W. Roskill's "Monuments of the War At Sea" is establishing itself, none the less, as a lucid and fearless account of one of the great chapters in British history.

His second volume, just published, brings the story up to 1943. Though a rapid and systematic worker, he found it still going. "When you're losing a war, you know there isn't so much paper. It's different when you begin to get on top."

Reviewers have naturally seized on certain controversial elements in the book—the Dieppe raid, the PQ convoys to Russia, and the break-through of the Gneisenau and the Scharnhorst; and, in effect, these are treated with a candour which some may find disconcerting. But this, in the author's view, follows inevitably from the official historian's privilege of seeing the complete Admiralty archives, minutes and all. The bitter

controversies of the 1920s sprang in part, after all, from the fact that there had not then been a full and frank "War At Sea."

#### More to Come

A Mancunian by origin, with strong legal affiliations (his father was in chambers with Asquith, and two of his brothers are Q.C.s), Captain Roskill combines an inherited regard for fact with a lifelong desire to write. C. P. Scott and Clifford Sharp encouraged his ambitions when he was just out of Dartmouth; and in the course of an exceptionally cosmopolitan Naval career (he was twenty years at sea and never served in the Home Fleet) he sharpened the powers of shrewd, humorous observation which may sometimes be



Captain Roskill

glimpsed even in the grave pages of the Official History.

It does not surprise me that an enterprising publisher has already engaged him, in his own right, for a series of books. The first of these, due later this year, is a history of "E.M.S. Warspite, 1596-1945."

#### In a Nutshell

"Asks Officer for Gun To Kill Self; Gets It; Does." (Headline from New York daily newspaper, January 28.)

#### People and Words

"Building Socialism is not like cultivating roses."

—Mr. KRASNOCHENKO.  
"Should we not feel considerably more secure in this country if we were not flanked by Mr. Dulles?"  
—Capt. R. A. FALKNER, M.P. (Cons. Poole, Dorset).

"Public buildings should be gems of art—not hives for clerks to drink tea in."  
—Sir ALBERT RICHARDSON, F.P.R.A.

"If a person woke up in the middle of the night and found an escaping tiger on top of his bed and suffered a heart attack, it would be nothing to the point that the intentions of the tiger were quite amiable."  
—Mr. JUSTICE DEVLIN.  
"Nobody is ever jealous of the Home Secretary's job."  
—Mr. CURRYE PA...



Henry Brooke

constitute something of a Parliamentary record. This experience, when combined with an all-but-legendary command of detail, should now serve him in good stead.

Welsh affairs now take up a great deal of his time, and he hopes to make a lengthy tour of that country when his immediate Parliamentary obligations have been fulfilled. I don't doubt that Mrs. Brooke, whose father was a Canon of the Church of Wales, will be a valuable guide to him in places where an English politician can easily run aground.

#### A Punctual Observance

YESTERDAY was Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick's sixtieth birthday. Ever exact in his observations, he took leave of his colleagues at the Foreign Office and is now, for the first time in